

Boniface the Eighth, the most powerful of those mediaeval Popes who attempted to set the yoke of the Papacy on the necks of kings and princes (1300-1307). The weapons used in the mighty struggle that decided the fate of Europe were chicanery, slander, bribery and assassination. After degrading itself and its adversary in the eyes of that and every succeeding age, the secular power emerged triumphant, to the undoubted advantage of mankind. Boniface the Eighth died from the effects of three days' captivity in the hands of the nobles of the Roman Campagna in the pay of the King of France; his successor perished suddenly after eating a questionable dish of figs. The choice of the next man to fill the hazardous situation took the Cardinals eleven months. The affair was finally arranged by a bargain between Philip and one of the candidates standing in the interest opposed to France. The King offered this man the votes of the French Cardinals to secure his election, on condition that he would reverse the policy of his predecessors and bring the Papacy into subjection to the French Crown. The mean and ambitious wretch consented, and the King wisely took his nephews as hostages. The election was carried, and Clement the Fifth came to live in France. Philip, who the year before had been to the Court of Borne what the King of Italy is to-day, an impious and unpardonable foe, went about in the odour of sanctity. He had devised and executed the grandiose plan, afterwards revived by Buonaparte and carried on by Napoleon the Third, of * exploiting the infallibility of enlisting the forces of the spiritual world in the service of French politicians. For the next seventy years of * Babylonish captivity at Avignon, the degradation of the Papacy was complete. Clement the Fifth was forced to preside over a trial in which charges of hideous infamy were heaped on the memory of Boniface. But the living Popes and Cardinals of Avignon soon attained a reputation for debauchery and avarice as black as that of the dead pontiff. At their iniquitous Court, benefices in every country of Catholic Europe were put up for sale, and the income spent in licentious splendour. In the year in which Clement the

* «Exploiter rinfaillibilite.¹ Micbclct, ed. 1861, lit, 98.